

# Entertainment Education

## 2001 Porter Novelli Healthstyles Survey

### TV Drama Viewers and Health Information

APHA Executive Summary, November 17, 2003

#### Introduction

Analysis of the 2001 Porter Novelli HealthStyles database was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Hollywood, Health & Society at the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. The dataset consists of responses from ten items that describe the characteristics of daytime and prime time TV drama viewers, and the effects of health content from TV storylines on their learning about health and actions taken.

The Porter Novelli HealthStyles survey is one of a pair of linked postal mail surveys sent to a sample of adults age 18 and older, which is drawn to be nationally representative on seven U.S. Census Bureau demographic characteristics. The first survey is a consumer survey in which data on general media habits, product use, interests, and lifestyle are collected. The second survey, HealthStyles, is administered to respondents to the first survey in which data on health attitudes, behaviors, conditions, and information seeking are collected. HealthStyles is a proprietary database product developed by Porter Novelli, a social marketing and public relations firm. The survey was conducted in July and August of 2001 with 3,719 respondents.

#### Key Findings

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of all respondents report watching **daytime and/or prime time drama TV shows** at least a few times a month and almost half (43%) are *regular viewers*, i.e. viewers who watch two or more times a week.

- Almost one-third (31%) of all respondents report watching **daytime dramas** at least a few times a month and about one-fifth (21%) are *regular viewers*, i.e. those who watch two or more times a week.
- About seven out of ten (71%) of all respondents report watching **prime time dramas** at least a few times a month, and nearly four out of ten (38%) are *regular viewers* who watch two or more times a week.
- Women, Blacks, young adults (ages 18–29), and those with lower income and less education consistently report watching **daytime/prime time** dramas more often than other groups.

Over half (57%) of *regular viewers* report learning something about a disease or how to prevent it from a **daytime/prime time** drama.

- Hispanic women report the highest rate (70%) of learning about health from TV dramas.
- Black women (65%) and Black men (64%) report the second highest rates of learning.

About one-third (34%) of *regular viewers* took one or more actions as a result of a TV health storyline, with women reporting more actions than men (37% vs. 29%).

## Implications

The HealthStyles findings suggest daytime and prime time TV dramas serve a critical health education service when they provide accurate, timely information about disease, injury and disability in their storylines for the vast majority of U.S. citizens who watch at least a few times a month – particularly for the 43% or 108 million people who are *regular viewers*, i.e. viewers who watch two or more times a week. Since audience reach is broad and effects are very strong, especially among minority viewers, the shows provide a critical channel for prevention information for these audiences. When even a small percentage of viewers take action as the result of a TV storyline, to protect or improve their own health or the health of someone they know, millions of people and their families can benefit. If a show fails to convey accurate information or portrays risky behavior without the associated health consequences, viewers may suffer negative effects as well.

The daily and weekly formats of daytime and prime time TV dramas can be very influential since audiences develop familiarity with regular characters and identify with characters they perceive to be like themselves. Behavioral scientists have demonstrated that this type of identification enhances learning and prevention – because audience members are inclined to model desirable behavior and avoid undesirable behavior – based on the experiences of characters they have come to know. Letters to the shows provide anecdotal evidence about the effects TV entertainment shows have on their audiences. Such letters from viewers include thanks for important health information, report visits and calls to doctors, tell of advice given to friends, and encourage producers to keep up the good work.

Writers and producers of TV storylines that address public health and safety issues may want to consider:

- Topics that impact a lot of people (e.g. teens/smoking, women/heart disease, or children/vaccines)
- Prevention information delivered or modeled by credible characters (e.g. checking the smoke alarm, using a seat belt, taking a daily vitamin, getting a flu vaccine, or exercising)

- Continuing storylines that explore the impact of disease, injury and disability on people's lives
- Characters with negative beliefs and poor health practices suffering the consequences
- Challenges and struggles these characters face in making changes, and the positive outcomes that result when they choose more positive beliefs and practices
- Storylines with characters who have health limitations or impairment, but practice healthy behaviors that contribute to their quality of life

## Summary of Findings

(Sample Size: 3,719 Respondents)

### Frequency of TV Dramas Viewing by Audiences

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of all respondents report watching **daytime and/or prime time (daytime/prime time) drama TV shows** at least a few times a month.

- Almost half (43%) are *regular viewers* who watch two or more times a week
- A majority (54%) of these *regular viewers* watch more than 3 times a week

Almost one-third (31%) of all respondents watch **daytime dramas** (like *The Bold & The Beautiful*, *General Hospital*, or *Days of Our Lives*) at least a few times a month.

- About one-fifth (21%) are *regular viewers* who watch two or more times a week
- Two-thirds of regular daytime viewers (14% of all respondents) watch more than 3 times a week

About seven out of ten (71%) of all respondents watch **prime time dramas** (like *ER*, *Touched By an Angel*, or *The Practice*) at least a few times a month.

- Nearly four out of ten (38%) are *regular viewers* who watch two or more times a week
- Nearly half of regular prime time viewers (18%) watch more than 3 times a week

Table 1. Frequency of TV Dramas Viewing by Audiences

Demographic Characteristics		Daytime/prime time Viewers
Race/Ethnicity	Black	51%
	Hispanic	41%
	White	42%
Gender	Males	33%
	Females	52%
Age	18–29	55%
	30–44	42%
	45–64	41%

	65 and above	34%
Income	Under \$20K	49%
	\$20K to \$49K	44%
	Above \$50K	40%
Education	High school or less	48%
	Some college	46%
	College or above	36%

### **TV Dramas as a Source for Learning about Health**

Over half (57%) of *regular viewers* report learning about a disease or how to prevent it from a TV drama in the past year. This includes:

- Nearly two-thirds (61%) of women vs. about half (51%) of men
- 65% of Black women vs. 64% of Black men
- 70% of Hispanic women vs. 55% of Hispanic men
- 60% of White women vs. 48% of White men

### **Impact of Health Topics in TV Shows: Actions Taken**

About one-third (34%) of *regular viewers* took one or more actions after hearing about a health issue or disease on a TV drama within the past year:

- 30% told someone about the story or health topic (33% of women vs. 25% of men)
- 9% told someone or did something to prevent the problem (11% of women vs. 8% of men)
- 5% visited a clinic, doctor, or nurse (4% of women vs. 5% of men)
- 2% called a clinic, health care place, or hotline number (2% of women vs. 1% of men)

Table 2. Actions taken by regular viewers of TV dramas

	All	Females	Males
Told someone about the story or health topic	30%	33%	25%
Told someone to do something or did something myself	9%	11%	8%
Visited a clinic, doctor, or nurse	5%	4%	5%
Called a clinic, health care place, or hotline number	2%	2%	1%

Blacks or Hispanics generally report taking action more often than Whites:

Table 3. Actions taken by regular viewers of TV dramas

	Females				Males			
	All	White	Black	Hispanic	All	White	Black	Hispanic
Took at least one action	37%	36%	41%	41%	29%	27%	36%	39%
Told someone about the story or health topic	33%	32%	34%	36%	25%	24%	21%	36%
Told someone to do something or did something myself	11%	10%	9%	14%	8%	7%	17%	4%
Visited a clinic, doctor, or nurse	4%	4%	7%	3%	5%	4%	11%	1%
Called a clinic, health care place, or hotline number	2%	1%	3%	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%

### Make a health care choice

Nearly three out of ten (29%) *regular viewers* indicate that a TV storyline helped with a health care choice. This includes:

- 30% of women vs. 27% of men
- 42% of Black women vs. 38% of Black men
- 38% of Hispanic women vs. 30% of Hispanic men
- 27% of White women vs. 25% of White men

### Provide health information to friends/family

Nearly half (45%) of *regular viewers* report that a TV storyline helped them provide important health information to their friends, family, or others. This includes:

- 48% of women vs. 42% of men
- 51% of Black women vs. 53% of Black men
- 60% of Hispanic women vs. 38% of Hispanic men
- 46% of White women vs. 41% of White men

## **Reference**

Beck, V., Huang, G.C., Pollard, W.E., Johnson, T.J. (2003). TV Drama viewers and health information. Paper presented at the American Public Health Association 131<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting and Exposition, San Francisco, California.